

Foster J. H.

ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

American Academy of Dental Science,

AT THEIR

THIRD ANNUAL MEETING.

BY J. H. FOSTER, M.D.

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BOSTON :

PRINTED BY ROCKWELL & CHURCHILL,

122 WASHINGTON STREET.

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BOSTON, Sept. 26, 1870.

DR. J. H. FOSTER:—

DEAR SIR:—At the Third Annual Meeting of the "American Academy of Dental Science," held in Boston this day, it was unanimously resolved, "That the hearty thanks of the Academy be presented to Dr. J. H. Foster, of New York, for his very able and excellent address, and that a copy be requested for publication, and for preservation in the archives of the 'Academy.'" Sincerely hoping that you will comply with this request,

I am, with high regard,

Very respectfully yours,

EDWARD N. HARRIS.

Secretary Am. Acad. of Dental Science.

NEW YORK, Dec. 14, 1870.

DEAR SIR:—I cheerfully comply with the request of the "American Academy of Dental Science," for a copy of the address prepared at their invitation, and delivered on the occasion of their late anniversary.

Gratified that it met their commendation, and regretting the unavoidable delay in responding to their desire for its publication, I submit it to the candor and indulgence of the profession and the public.

I am, truly and respectfully yours,

J. H. FOSTER.

DR. EDWARD N. HARRIS.

Secretary Am. Acad. of Dental Science.

ADDRESS.

Mr. President, Ladies, and Gentlemen of the "American Academy of Dental Science":—

YOUR Honorable President, in the very able address he delivered to you a year ago, enumerated the different and multiform mechanical pursuits, a knowledge of which in combination he considered essentially requisite in the making of a thoroughly educated dental practitioner.

It is my intention at this time to speak upon the subject of professional responsibility, and to inquire how far and how fast we are progressing in the march of improvement, with the increased means and appliances for advancement afforded by the establishment of Dental Schools and Colleges, Societies and Associations, as contrasted with the old method of private instruction.

We are all actuated, I trust, with an earnest desire of elevating the standard of professional attainment, whatever may be our individual opinions as to the best way of accomplishing it. It would be a Herculean task to trace from the small beginnings, one after another, the numerous discoveries, in the fields of art and science, of the present age. After ages will refer to it as an epoch in the world's history. It was more than forty centuries before a person was born who had the brains to perceive that the steam which came from a kettle could be converted into a motive power to impel ships, propel cars, run mills and factories, and give to such a variety of mechanical pursuits multiplied activity and usefulness.

Labor-saving appliances in the way of machinery are continually increasing to meet the varied demands of humanity, and man is constantly seeking out new inventions. Many such are improvements. Innovations, however, are not always improvements. There may be those who do better with them than without; but I am inclined to agree with Ruskin, that "hand-work is the road to true art."

There are yet a few things that the hand findeth to do, which, if done with all its cunning and skill, patented contrivances cannot achieve. With all courtesy to the march of modern improvement, I would shield our own profession from the temptation of making too great use of new methods and inventions. The *lame* have need of a crutch; not those who can walk. The question is, can gold in any other way be as thoroughly consolidated and welded together as it has been in *old-fashioned* fillings, that have stood the test for half a century or more, put in by the gentle pressure and nice manipulation of a fine instrument, in the well-directed fingers of those who are now called the *old fogies* of the profession? Time alone will settle this question, — the same time to test the newer method that the *old* has outlived; no more, no less.

New measures and remedies, of a reformatory and sanitary nature, are imperatively demanded. The necessity for more care and caution in the means of prevention, and remedial treatment in the cure of disease, are subjects to be gravely considered. Our *professional responsibilities* are great. The purity of our motives must become a living power. We must bring to our aid an earnest desire for the truth, to know it and to practise it, without fear or favor. As industry is one of the conditions of excellence, so it is one of the first conditions of success in our profession. Ruskin says again, that "as life without industry is guilt, so industry without art is brutality."

In reviewing the past, it is easy to see how much our

specialty has been elevated and advanced by the well-directed thought and action, the force of character, the conscientious, honest, and earnest labors of its prominent leaders. This spirit of truth, this same zeal for knowledge and desire for excellence, must continue to animate the hearts of our professional brethren, and stimulate them to ever-increasing activity in the future. Let us hope that the youngest among us may see that "good time coming," when the men capable of good works, and resolute in good works, for the work's sake, and for humanity's sake, shall constitute the majority of practitioners of Dental Surgery.

That charming writer, Charles Lamb, whose humor was always subservient to his humanity, in a letter to a Quaker friend, declares, between fun and philosophy, that "he looks upon the fingers of each hand, with which nature has furnished him, with a certain degree of horror, when he reflects on their strange and mysterious adaptation to purposes of crime." And he concludes with a pathetic admonition to the Quaker, "to take thought, and know himself, and stay his fingers in good time." Lamb never said anything without a purpose, and his meaning here was deep and serious. The moral of his jest is, that no discipline makes wrong-doing impossible; that there is a strength of latent mischief in the heart, nay, in the very fingers, which can break down all the bulwarks raised by education, and to which there are no impregnable barriers.

Oh, that young men might realize, on entering the profession, that it is not the fingers alone which are called upon to work; but that mental energy, a well-balanced mind, conscientious intent, resolute, unwavering principle, must be brought into action for the proper discharge of their important duties! We must *all* examine ourselves, our motives, aims, and desires. Have *we* sought to gather wisdom from the experience of our predecessors, from their inventions and discoveries, as well as from their failures, short-

comings, and mistakes? Do we excel in surgical as well as in mechanical skill? Do we possess that critical acumen required in the taking away as well as substituting? In creating voids in due proportion to required length, breadth, and depth, as well as in mechanically welding together, impervious, substantial, indestructible metallic bases and superstructures?

These are questions which it would be profitable for us all to ask ourselves, every day and every year that we continue in practice, though they be fourscore years and ten, if we would do well, and hope to continue in well-doing.

How many of us can respond with an unconditional affirmative to these questions? There are comparatively few in the vast ocean of time who rise above a respectable mediocrity.

“Rari nantes in gurgite vasto.”

We disclaim all intention of arrogating the position of public censor in any remarks which may be expressed, and everything which may be attributed to motives of a personal, local, or more especially of a malevolent character. A searching investigation into, and a judicious discussion of, professional progress, periodically, is useful and important. New vitality is thereby generated, and a new impetus given to all its departments and activities. Whatever the wise and prudent believe obstructs onward progress in practical utilitarianism, that they are morally obligated to censure and oppose, and *vice versa*. However much we may differ as to the minor details, as do many of us practically in the *modus operandi*, we cannot disagree upon the necessity and importance of a right view of the subject as to its final issues.

Ability and *Stability* are the two most important requisites to success. *Ability* comprises a combination of personal characteristics with moral and physical powers thoroughly trained

and cultured. *Stability* is that continuity of character, that fixed purpose, which, grappled and retained as with hooks of steel, constitutes the true effective nobility of man's nature, and makes him to exercise wisely and well that high attribute, *Judgment*, the power to determine between good and evil, right and wrong, the want of which often renders nugatory the best efforts of the otherwise conscientious and skilful operator.

To meet the requirements of the present day, to be competent to perform operations up to the highest standard of professional attainment, a man must first be fitly educated. He must also possess that stability of character and purpose which will stimulate him to the pursuit of knowledge, which is every man's power. If he desires to increase his influence, he must continually add to his knowledge, remembering that the poet says: —

“A little learning is a dangerous thing;
 Drink deep or taste not the Pierian spring.”

It will not do to fold the arms in self-complacent confidence, when one has reached the attainment of sufficient practice to occupy all his time, satisfied with having secured “a local habitation and a name.” Whittier says: —

“The name is but the shadow, which we find
 Too often larger than the man behind.”

Wisdom is of slow growth. Every well-doer must continue to progress in well-doing, or he will retrograde. There is no limit, no goal, no turning-point, no stopping-place. Every studious, truth-searching, aspiring man may improve upon his predecessors in theory and in practice; nay, more, he may improve upon himself, by adding knowledge to knowledge, word upon word, precept upon precept, act upon act, day by day, and year after year. Do we realize the rapid advancement in progressive improve-

ment at the present day? The increased ways of obtaining a liberal and thorough preparatory education at some one of the numerous Dental Schools and Colleges which have been instituted? The opportunities afterwards offered to those meriting the distinction of admission into local Associations and Societies?

In no other professional or mechanical pursuit has the march of improvement exceeded it, and in no other have there been so many obstacles to obstruct the way.

"The American Society of Dental Surgeons," convened in the city of New York, in the year 1840, was the first important Association ever founded. It was the pioneer in removing some of these obstructions and preparing the way for the formation of other societies. It commenced under favorable auspices, and with a great degree of enthusiasm on the part of the few individuals who were its founders. It continued to flourish many years, until it included among its members a large majority of the most distinguished dentists of the United States. I know that some of its later acts were deemed arbitrary by a portion of its members. Be that as it may, so long as it continued to exist it exerted upon the profession a most salutary influence. However exclusive and exacting in its requirements of membership, the annual meetings were a source of pleasure and mutual advantage to very many men of ability from distant sections of the country, who might otherwise never have known the value of a mutual acquaintance. Its discussions eliminated much profitable information, the reports of which, in the "American Journal of Dental Science," were eagerly sought for by the profession at large, as the best and strongest authority extant.

This Society held its last annual meeting in New York, August, 1856. The "American Dental Convention," an association formed the previous year, being in session at the same time, and in the same city. By the efforts of the late

Doctor Elisha Townsend, of Philadelphia, and others, a resolution in favor of a dissolution of the former was proposed. It was adopted, and a large number of its members immediately joined the latter, signed the articles of association, and became *ipse facto* members of a convention abrogating the original platform upon which the "American Society" was established, and dispensing with the safe and salutary restrictions in regard to all candidates for admission,—true worth, ability, scientific knowledge and attainment, having been the conditions of membership, the groundwork of association in the "American Society of Dental Surgeons."

I do not for a moment question the sincerity and good intent which led those gentlemen to immolate the "American Society," and lend their aid in building a new one, upon the broader platform and more politic ground of free association; but I always questioned their wisdom. It has been said that "Wisdom groundeth her laws upon an infallible rule of comparison." In this the comparison was complete. It was an absolute surrender of anterior principles of action.

Upon this subject I desire to quote some remarks from a former address delivered before the "Society of the Alumni of the Baltimore College," as far back as the year 1849. My object in this is twofold. Firstly, to represent that my views, as then expressed, have undergone no change since that time; and, secondly, to assert and maintain my firm conviction that the same causes have acted, and are continuing to act, in no small degree, upon other institutions of a later date, so as to retard their growth in power and usefulness.

Societies and associations have been formed for the avowed purpose of improving and elevating the profession. The questions naturally arise, What good has been effected heretofore by societies? How have they been organized, conducted? And how have they succeeded? And of those which still exist, what is their present position?"

The history of the past furnishes but a melancholy and

discouraging picture of experiments. Many local societies have been formed, which, after struggling through a brief existence, have expired. To what cause shall we attribute these failures? I answer, *chiefly* to the want of sufficient material of a proper character to form a solid fabric; and to the introduction, as a substitute, of such as could not assimilate with, or be consistently united in, the building of a strong and substantial edifice, harmonious, beautiful, and regular in its proportions.

In order to ensure the permanent existence and success of a society, the subject should engage the attention and secure the interest of every individual of known influence and character in the profession, within its precincts (to the exclusion of all who are not qualified, in every respect, to assist in the work), and with these it must be a common cause, or effort will be useless. It is unnecessary to enter largely into the character of other associations to prove this. Most members of the profession are acquainted with their history, and particularly with that of the "American Society of Dental Surgeons." I, for one, had entered reluctantly into that association, in the beginning, because I doubted its success. I expressed an unwillingness to join it, and stated my fears that too much latitude would be given in the admission of members. There were others who had like doubts and misgivings. Its able and venerable first President, the lamented Dr. Hayden, who was the prime mover and founder of the institution, in the last conversation which I remember to have had with him, remarked, "that he had been disappointed in his fondest hopes, his long cherished aspirations; that there had not been sufficient circumspection, and that we had advanced too fast and too far in much too short a time." These views expressed so long ago, are equally applicable now. *Too fast and too far* may have evil consequences, as well as being too slow and behind the age. And this I think may affect colleges as well as societies and associations. Having

cited one of the latter as an example, I will express my views plainly regarding one of the former, and that among the latest established, and nearest home.

The "New York College of Dentistry" has been in operation during the past five years. I was disposed to take an active part in its affairs, provided it aspired to my ideal of a Collegiate Institution; and having been invited, attended a preliminary meeting for a discussion of plans, purposes, and intentions. At a second meeting I addressed to them the following communication:—

"NEW YORK, April 18th, 1866.

"In consequence of an accident, which confines me to the house, I am prevented from accepting the invitation to attend a meeting of the Corporators of the 'New York Dental College' this evening. I cannot refrain from expressing my distrust of the undertaking in which you are so earnestly interested. It seems to me that, notwithstanding the zealous efforts of its friends, the college will prove a failure, unless most carefully conducted. I mean by a failure, something inadequate, not reaching a certain anticipated elevation.

"I had hoped that no charter would ever be obtained to found such an institution in this city, unless a united effort should be made by the best men as petitioners; and not until assured that we had a sufficient number among us in every way qualified for its duties, and capable of filling all its most important offices.

"Actuated by these motives, when I first heard it rumored that a petition for a charter for this college would be sent to Albany by certain individuals, I requested one of our Senators to notify me of any such movement, resolving that I would devote my time then and there, with the aid of others, to the accomplishment of its defeat. I was never notified, and the bill was passed before I knew it had been proposed. Your ultimate success must depend upon the election of the

very best and most efficient members of our specialty to fill its chairs as professors, men who are not only good operators, but instructors and lecturers, able to command the confidence and respect of students, as well as the profession.

"If the counsels and deliberations of your corporators result in a course of action based upon self-negation, and are proofs against every attempt for individual advancement and aggrandizement, you will, I trust, be able to realize your highest expectations, and would then receive my warmest sympathy and congratulations.

"I remain, etc., etc."

This was subsequently followed by another, to the effect that, in accordance with the sentiments expressed in the previous letter, I was constrained to decline the honor of being an officer in that institution. I have nevertheless watched with much anxiety its slow and interrupted course. It was unfortunate in its inception, and has labored under the disadvantage of a continuous change of officers, year after year, until it has nearly exhausted the number of all our most prominent practitioners in its different chairs.

My faith in its success was early shaken, when, on taking up the July number of the "American Journal of Dental Science," 1867, I read the article on the "Treatment of Pulpless Teeth," by one of its leading Professors, commencing with the sentence, "When a man openly advocates heresy, it behooves him to look well to his proofs;" and then proceeding to inculcate the doctrine, that "pulpless teeth not only *need not*, but *ought not*, to be filled at all;" winding up by advising the *exploded* practice of *ventilation*, by "drilling a hole into the pulp cavity through the neck of the tooth, at the edge of the alveolar ridge." This *absurd doctrine*, at this late day, and in this enlightened age (all the available improvements in the treatment of dead teeth to the contrary

notwithstanding), absolutely advocated in a serious, argumentative article of six columns! closing with the remark, "that some readers will laugh at this, and some will rail."

All that need be said of the article is:—

"Though this be madness, yet there's method in it."

Our Colleges have *weighty responsibilities* resting upon them. Asking one who had been a Professor in two of our Dental Colleges, and had graduated from his private school several accomplished practitioners, *in which* he thought his efforts had been most successful, he answered, in his *private school*. Undoubtedly there are many advantages in a collegiate course of education for our specialty, but they might be greatly amended and improved.

I regret to single out an institution, in my own city, as an example or exponent of the *views* I entertain regarding collegiate education. *These* are not confined to any particular locality, and would be as soon and freely expressed regarding the Dental College in your city, or any other, if I knew its status, and realized its deficiencies. Too large a number of Clinical Lecturers in one Board is eminently detrimental. (This is why the one-man power is most effective.) At one time there were a dozen and more in the New York College, in addition to the Faculty and Professors.

The *theory* in a clinique, under so many different instructors, would be confusing; much more so their *practical methods* of performing the same operation. The homely adage, "Too many cooks spoil the broth," is applicable. To make good broth, practical demonstration from one scientific artist — a "Monsieur Blot" — would be more effective, than to see twenty different individuals, however skilful, doing the same thing in different ways. I have thought that in this respect, one or more Dental Chairs in a Medical College, filled by competent representatives of our specialty, combined with a private school education, under the best

instructors, capable of more direct practical benefit, and a more solid and complete system of education.

It is time and labor lost for any one to attempt to do the same thing equally well in a variety of ways; as much so as it would be to construct an architectural edifice from a multiplicity of designs. I never but once attempted to change my life-long mode of filling teeth, from the principles of practice in which I had been instructed; and that was many years ago, when induced to think that the method of another practitioner (whose opinion and operations I respected) was attainable with less outlay of physical and mental force than my own. After careful experiment, I found that the same results could not be as well accomplished, and when trying to get back upon the old track, it was as difficult a matter as "Abbey" once found it to return to his long-tried, "old-time foil," after having changed its character to meet, as he thought, the demand for a less malleable and more crystalline article.

It is safer, gentlemen, to make no radical changes, unless one feels that he is radically wrong, — *then* the sooner the better. Experiments in the direction of making improvements in old and established modes of practice, to find a shorter and easier way of attaining the same end, are extremely doubtful, and, if unsuccessful, tend to weaken our former usefulness.

At the present day there is an ever-increasing propensity, on the part of many in the profession, to give an exposition of wonderful inventions and discoveries, the result of their experience, in some one or another of the thousand monthly publications and weekly issues of dental literature. Novitiates catch the contagion, ambitious to appear in print, to become correspondents and authors! This "cacoethes scribendi" is becoming universal, and some who are seized with this itch for writing, carry out to the full, "Dogberry's" injunction, "Write me down an ass." One describes at great length some new method, which he sup-

poses nobody ever heard of, and which perhaps is some rejected or exploded theory advanced half a century ago. Another publishes a discovery or invention, which, very likely, has been tried and condemned by different ingenious operators, as inert and useless, times without number. Our dental periodicals multiply and expand in proportion to this mass of proffered material, until the Quarterlies become Monthlies, and the Monthlies Weeklies.

Many years ago, about the time of the dissolution of the American Society, a few prominent representatives of the profession from Boston, New York, and Baltimore, were invited to convene in Philadelphia. The object of this meeting was to establish a Quarterly Review, especially for the purpose of criticising, curbing, and controlling the numerous minor publications, increasing to such an extent as to become pernicious in their effect, by disseminating false ideas and doctrines, calculated to mislead well-meaning, but inexperienced, searchers after truth.

I happened to meet in the cars, while on my way there, your highly esteemed citizen "Dr. J. V. C. Smith," then Editor of the "Boston Medical and Surgical Journal." I remember well the horror he expressed, when, in answer to the question, "What takes you to Philadelphia?" the reply was, "We are going, with others of our profession, to take measures for establishing a 'Dental Periodical.'" "Do you not know that your speciality is already publishing more pages of matter every week than the whole medical and surgical profession combined?" When told that our express purpose was to publish a Review intended to reform this very evil, he admitted that "it was a commendable movement." Nevertheless:—

"The best laid schemes o' mice and men
Gang aft a-gley."

This well-devised plan, after due consideration, as to the details necessary to effect its successful consummation, failed, through some misapprehension or misunderstanding on the part of its friends and advisers.

A wide-spread and ever-increasing tendency to speculate and theorize, as if every man was possessed with the conviction that the pen in his hand was mightier than the other steel points he had better try and use, tempts one to shout the old Greek cry : —

“ Give us practice and not theory.”

How many men are eager to impart knowledge to others, before they are themselves superior and experienced practitioners ! Knowledge is not a natural gift and inspiration. It must be acquired, and to this end there must be capacity. The greater the capacity, the more it may be made to expand by use ; and in proportion to the active exercise of the reasoning faculties with which man is endowed by his Creator, will he advance in Christian progress and usefulness.

Knowledge is *power*, and its attainment requires a continuous, life-long pursuit. *Knowledge* may impart *wisdom* to its possessor. *Wisdom* to guide pre-supposes the knowledge requisite to assume responsibilities. How foolish would it be for one to attempt to direct the course of a vessel, with little or no knowledge of navigation ! So in every other pursuit in life. *Knowledge*, however, does not always entail *wisdom*. Cowper says : —

“ *Knowledge* and *wisdom*, far from being one,
Have oftentimes no connection. *Knowledge* dwells
In heads replete with thoughts of other men ;
Wisdom, in minds attentive to their own ;
Knowledge is proud that he has learned so much ;
Wisdom is humble that he knows no more.”

Zeal without knowledge and the wisdom to direct, as knowledge without zeal, are alike inert. Combined, they are all-powerful and effective means for advancement in practical utility to profitable ends and purposes.

Professor Austin, of the "Baltimore College," in an article published in 1867, says: "In arts which advance with such rapidity as Dentistry, some will fall into the error of remaining content with the present, and not seek to add their quota to future progress. Others commit the greater error of constantly seeking after something new, neither acknowledging the value of past discovery, nor willing to test properly the discoveries of the present. Rejoicing in the soubriquet of Young America, they speak contemptuously of the *old fogies* of the profession, not realizing that this same element of old-fogyism is the balance-wheel which gives steadiness of motion to their spasmodic impulses. At no time has this conservative influence been more needed than now, when so many practitioners seek to enlarge their business, less by doing an old thing well than by offering the newest thing out. This is not progress. The spirit of Young America is not progress."

Your neophyte does not always comprehend the nature and degree of the toil requisite to solid proficiency; but his vanity will not allow him to acknowledge his ignorance, even when he is fortunate enough to be aware of it. He cannot see himself as others see him, but continues to nourish his conceit, and glorify his own works for, perhaps, a lifetime. The only way in which an individual can acquire a true idea of his own powers in this, or any other, profession is to commence practice without propping or factitious aid, and invite the opinion of an unprejudiced and indifferent public. It is better for every young man to build the superstructure of his future greatness himself, upon the basis of his own exertions; it is more reliable,—humility, perseverance, patience, and moderation being its supports. As many

young men fail in their expectations by an ambition to do too much, as by not doing enough, attempting to do great things before doing small.

“ All things great are in all things little.”

This is a good motto in commencing, and if more were influenced by it when in the full tide of successful practice, there would be fewer backsliders and apostates, —

“ Those who hurry on, but with backsliding haste.”

Fidelity, the faithful adherence to duty and obligation, is an essential attribute for men in our profession. In the last number of “ Edwin Drood,” Charles Dickens says of one of his characters, “ The largest fidelity to a trust was the life-blood of the man. There are sorts of life-blood which course more quickly, more gayly, more attractively, but there is no better sort in circulation.”

How many young men, impatient of slow progress, elaborating and perfecting operations with seeming inadequate remuneration, having “ cast their bread upon the waters,” grow tired of waiting till “ it shall return to them again,” throw care and consideration to the winds, and sacrifice all love of art, prospect of future reputation, and fall from their high estate “ like Lucifer, never to rise again ! ”

How many men of promise, instead of continuing zealous in good works until they have established a remunerative scale of prices, commensurate with the value of their operations, fail through an insatiate greed of “ the almighty dollar,” and seeking some easier way to satisfy their desire for gain, immolate themselves upon the altar of Mammon !

The *quality*, and not the *quantity*, of operations must ever constitute the transcendant difference between those on different rounds of the ladder to fame. Reputation founded on merit must be the result of industry, capacity, and continuity. We

want, then, more true, consistent, steadfast workers. Not narrow men with narrow prejudices, but whole-souled men, who believe that it is true worth, the honest heart, the God-fearing conscience, that constitute the nobility of nature, and who exemplify it in their lives. This is the surest way to eradicate imposture, and advance the standard of professional art.

The public mind has to be gradually enlightened, to become impressed with the importance of the subject. The community must realize to the full extent the evil and ruinous consequences attendant upon the operations of a large proportion of practitioners; and in due time laws may be enacted, and restrictions imposed, which will regulate present abuses. That uneducated men in this enlightened age should be permitted to assume and practise all the operations pertaining to so responsible a calling, is a crime, and heavy penalties should be adjudged. What excuse is there for delay? Why palliate it? Why thus tacitly sanction it? Why permit this cold-blooded and iniquitous disregard of human suffering to continue longer?

Societies and associations are formed for the prevention of cruelty to animals, and are successful in having laws enacted and enforced to that effect, *and it is well*. Is a man any less criminal, who, on the highway, at the corner of one of our streets, seizes a boy's head, and while he holds it in chancery, rubs his teeth with some baneful acid, and shows a gaping crowd how easy it is to make black white? And yet he is no more criminal than one who practises evil covertly,—not in the open street, but it may be in a freestone front on some fashionable thoroughfare. Where are the guardians and protectors of public morals in this respect? Where the custodians of sanitary measures? In some of the governments of Europe, charlatanism is restrained by laws which subject the offender to severe penalties. Even down-trodden, unrecognized, disenfran-

chised Cuba has a protective system to guard her citizens against this shameless, brazen imposition. A license to practise is required there, based upon showing accredited testimonials of knowledge and skill. In this land of liberty, a government tax of ten dollars licenses anybody.

Reform, Mr. President, *reform* is imperative; and those who profess to be in knowledge, in spirit and in truth doers of the work, should inaugurate it. It is incumbent upon all who are combined together to advance the general good, through colleges, associations and societies, to use their efforts to improve and utilize these means, as well as each in his private, individual capacity so to order his ways, and improve his opportunities, as to be a living power in his profession.

There are several points regarding professional shortcomings, upon which I shall be plain-spoken. If I incur the risk of casting stones, it is with the knowledge that I "live in a glass house" myself. Nevertheless my shots are aimed at the officers and leaders everywhere, more than at the rank and file.

First and foremost in the sins of omission, then, may be classed that of an unhealthy condition of the mucous membrane of the mouth, — arising from neglect in not properly removing, as often as necessary, the accumulation and deposit of tartar, affecting alike injuriously both gums and teeth, — and not instructing the patient how best to secure a comparative immunity from disease, by the right way of using brushes, wood-pointed sticks, floss silk, etc. It is no uncommon thing to see this general sanitary condition disregarded in a mouth where other operations of great merit have been performed. In an economical point of view, if no other, it is of great importance to the patient. If, then, this operation is neglected, because the fee is disproportionate to the time consumed, why not equalize it?

For both patient and operator this ounce of prevention will be worth incomparably more than the pound of cure.

Next in importance is the neglect to institute stated critical examinations of the teeth, dependent in frequency upon their character, structure, and organization, in different individuals, particularly at an early age. Buccal surfaces of the Posterior Molares, not reached by the brush, and which once requiring to be filled, prove not only the most difficult operations to be performed, but the most uncertain, the same cause continuing to produce the same effect, unless the *preventive* course is pursued. How much better that it should be done before disease attacks them, by admonishing the patient, and imperatively stating the necessity for extreme attention to those remote surfaces!

Another oversight is the neglect to discover disease until the enamel breaks in. This involves so much increased suffering to the patient, as well as difficulty to the operator, in the extra labor, time, and skill required, that more attention should be given to examinations; and if the operator considers it labor lost, let him charge a fee for his time. It would not, I think, be grudged by the patient, in view of immunity from present suffering, and the comforting assurance of security to his or her teeth for a still longer period.

It should also be considered a sacred duty on the part of the operator to instruct his patients how much their care may diminish the number of operations upon approximal surfaces, and, when the teeth have already been separated and filled, the necessity for keeping those surfaces clean and polished. The comparative durability of our operations depends much upon this, and earnest preaching may sometimes do as much good as practice, in ensuring a favorable result.

Carelessness in the mode of separating teeth, particularly the front incisors, is a point of grave consideration. Fillings cannot always be concealed, but often their

edges, and sometimes a part of the fillings, are manifestly upon front surfaces, when they might have been under them.

No one would suppose that a man who had modelled and carved Artificial Teeth as a part of his education could ever lose sense of the importance of form and outline, and become unmindful or regardless of artistic skill in this respect, when operating upon the Natural Teeth. How common it is to see the latter mutilated and deformed, or so filed and cut away as to render subsequent operations extremely difficult and complicated, as if "some of Nature's journeymen had made men, and not made them well, they imitated Nature so abominably."

The great importance of rounding, blunting, and making smooth, sharp edges and points upon the grinding surfaces, formed by the wear and tear of antagonistic teeth, is too much disregarded,—these knife and saw edges forming weapons of offence alike destructive to the teeth and to the fillings in them. The much-abused File, gentlemen, is effective; and if called into requisition more frequently in such cases would prove a valuable auxiliary for the modification of this evil, in a short and summary way.

I would earnestly protest against a new method of separating teeth, for the purpose of filling cavities upon approximal surfaces, called instantaneous wedging, that is, driving wedges with a mallet above the affected surfaces, under the gum, between the necks of the teeth, with sufficient force to obtain the same room at once which it takes ten days or a fortnight to effect by the gradual, slow, and safe old method.

The shortest way of performing operations,—as in all other things, the *fastest time*,—seems to have become the aim and purpose, the great desideratum of the nineteenth century.

How comparatively few operators treat dead teeth, prepare and fill nerve cavities, in the most approved, thorough,

and scientific manner, after the superior modern method ! Who among us that ever practised the ancient barbarous method of destroying nerves is not thankful for the modern, humane, and painless way of performing the same operation ?

I congratulate you, my brethren, that in our specialty, as in the practice of medicine, the necessity for the use of the lancet is almost entirely abolished. I have several of these little instruments laid aside, with the name of "Dixwell" upon them, purchased long ago at the sale of the effects of that old physician of your city. Who can tell how often they had been used in preceding years, in venesection, and how often since for opening abscesses consequent upon filling dead teeth after the old method, into which we were inducted by the most ancient and honorable of the profession ?

Why, gentlemen, the old difficult way of withdrawing a charge from a gun, and the easy way with which its removal from a modern breech-loader is effected, is a just comparison. I have not opened an abscess, resulting from any fang operation of my own, for seven years, and might enter into a minute investigation of causes and effects, physiological and pathological, the consideration of which would occupy too much time.

Suffice it to say, that I consider this special success attributable to the *vis inertiae*, the division and subdivision of the operation ; never excising and removing the nerve until the sensibility is deadened by chemical agencies ; never filling the nerve cavity the same day that the nerve has been excised ; never filling the crown cavity the same day on which the fang is filled, and at no sitting continuing the operation after a feeling of soreness is induced by the irritation of working upon the tooth ; but applying kreosote to the interior, as a counter-irritant, close the external cavity for the time, with "Hill's Stopping," and wait till another day. Teeth which have been long dead, and have absorbed into their structure offensive matter, require still more time

for their purification. Some writers have attributed injurious effects to the continued use of kreosote. I have never seen such results, when it is applied in homeopathic quantities only, however oft repeated. Great importance should be attached to perfecting this operation at the apex of the fang; and when Pivot Teeth are engrafted upon fangs, the latter should undergo a similar expectant course of treatment, thorough and complete, that after evil consequences may not ensue, and need not even be apprehended.

I come now to a very important point, — a consideration of the treatment of the *Six-year or First Permanent Molars*. Is there one observant person among us, in practice for the last quarter of a century, who has failed to see the gradually increasing change in the organic structure of this particular tooth? Instead of being what it once was, a *permanent* tooth, has it not become, to all intents and purposes, deciduous? This I affirm to be the general rule. Of course there are exceptions, but they only prove the rule, and are continually decreasing in number. In all its characteristics, color, external and internal composition, and organic structure, it has become a *temporary* tooth; and in a majority of cases has less power to resist the action of those agencies which attack and destroy these organs than the temporary teeth have been supplied with. We daily see them crumbling away in the first year of their development, under influences which they were once as powerful to resist as any of the other permanent teeth, nay, more so than the Bicuspides.

Some have been inclined to dispute this position, and defend these poor teeth, which have no defensive armor themselves. Others deny that they are weak subjects, and insist that with proper treatment they may continue as long-lived as the rest. But "facts are stubborn things." The only question is, what, under the circumstances, is the specific? What is to be the mode of treatment? My own con-

victions, matured and strengthened with every year, have become settled and established modes of practice.

I trust, however, that no one will be influenced to adopt any system advocated and urged by another, except by evidence based upon the result of his own practical observation ; for

“He that complies against his will
Is of his own opinion still.”

Such converts are always clogs in the way of advancement.

I have no disposition to be considered “Sir Oracle,” and desire only to awaken all to a consideration of matters having an important bearing upon professional responsibilities : to provoke agitation, excite discussion, and stimulate a desire for disputation even ; for out of this come light and truth.

Concisely, then, as to the treatment of the Six-year, or First Permanent Molares, they should be *extracted* in a large majority of cases.

Admitting this rule, how are we to know the exceptions ? Is there any definite period, any stated time, when this operation should be performed ? I answer, *beyond certain limits*, no ! It will not do to act upon the principle, “If t’were well t’were done, when t’is done, t’were well t’were done quickly.” We must gather wisdom by observation and experience. Pursue an expectant course of treatment, so as to give them trial. Prove them, and learn whether their ultimate retention will be for good or evil. At all events, the attempt should be made to guard against their loss until the “Second” or “Twelve-year Molares” shall have been developed ; and if we find the latter so far back as to be predisposed to disease, from inability on the part of the patient to reach them effectually with the brush, or a crowded and irregular condition of the teeth generally, thereby inducing disease upon the approximal surfaces, *then* their extraction is *imperative*. In how many cases do we fail to see this combination consummated ?

Great consideration should be given to the theory advanced some years ago, by one of my honored instructors, Doctor Joshua Tucker, and afterwards endorsed by Dr. O. W. Holmes and others, that "the jaws of the Anglo-Saxon race have contracted, and that, whereas there was originally room for sixteen teeth in each jaw, there is now room but for fourteen."

The *Wisdom Tooth* proves much more reliable, if the First Molares have been extracted early; the Second Molares having moved forward to fill the vacancy, it takes the position of the latter, and having thereby additional room to develop, becomes a much more durable substitute.

Many persons still practise upon the supposition that the First Molares can and should be retained, under any and all circumstances, and insist upon pursuing the old theory of disregarding the preservation of the Wisdom Teeth. But if the front and lateral teeth are crowded and irregular, how is this *high pressure* to be reduced by persisting in this false theory and practice? I do not hesitate to affirm that any man, who ignorantly or wilfully shuts his eyes to the necessity of a *judicious thinning out*, in the mouths of young patients, may increase twofold the number of their operations in successive years, and incur the risk of losing both Six-year and Wisdom Teeth, besides increasing the chances of having to renew his fillings again and again, until finally, perhaps, in advanced life, his patients may find themselves in this condition, to use a scriptural quotation, "And behold seven thin ears, and blasted with the east wind." And he may then remorsefully cry out, "'Tis Cæsar's sword has made Rome's senate little, and thinned its ranks."

You will perceive, gentlemen, that I lay great stress upon this point. It is the *most important* one. More may be done in the way of prevention, by a judicious and wise course in this respect, than in any other.

When, in former years, it was deemed essential to advise

the extraction of teeth in either jaw, in consequence of too crowded a condition, the response on the part of patients or friends was, "We will not consent to have sound teeth extracted." It seems to be an all-wise dispensation of Providence, that in view of the proportionate increase of disease at an early age, these Six-year Teeth have become what they are, so that we can imperatively say, under certain conditions, there is no use in trying to keep them, and the decrease of disease in the other teeth depends upon their extraction. But, alas! how many weak-minded, procrastinating, subservient men there are, ready to yield to solicitation or dictation, from mistaken motives of self-interest, or the promptings of a compassionate but injudicious humanity! "Fiat justitia, ruat cœlum."

In the way of *professional responsibility*, there should be no hesitancy, no doubt, no misgivings; and he who decidedly asserts and upholds his convictions will most surely receive the confidence of his patients, as well as maintain his own self-respect.

The popular cry, we know, is, "Oh, we never extract permanent teeth; it is unnecessary,—*we* can save them! The *old fogies* advocate and practise such a course, but it is not at all in our way." What sympathizing parent is not most willing to be governed by this advice, to save a child the real and imaginary agony of extraction, bestowing at the same time a grateful regard upon *so considerate* a professional adviser? This delusion, however, must be short-lived, and woe to him who is thus influenced, and says, like Richard, "I have set my life upon a cast to stand the hazard of the die;" for ultimately he will surely die in professional *caste* and *reputation*.

Many there are, at the present day, who build superstructures upon such bases, at an immense cost, which are beautiful to behold, admirable specimens of artistic skill, and, if the substructure were only as perfect, might continue durable

and serviceable ; but, alas, too often there is no foundation, and the architect must be likened unto "A foolish man which built his house upon the sand ; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house ; and it fell ; and great was the fall of it."

In concluding, a few remarks of a sanitary nature regarding ourselves may not be amiss. Most of us are overworked ; and excess of work involves the need, particularly as we advance in life, of regular intervals of relaxation. Few of us are disposed to be governed by wisdom or common sense, in this matter, until it is too late. It is a very poor economy, not to strengthen and utilize the physical power that God has given to man, to work out the term of his natural existence. None of us should be restrained from taking a long vacation from the fear of losing business. An earnest, conscientious devotion to the interests of our patients will earn from them a grateful appreciation of our labors, and the pressing need of resting from them for a season. How many there are, alas, who rest from their labors eternally, whose lives and usefulness might have been extended and multiplied !

When the old woman told her doctor that "she feared her health was failing, because, on reading the newspapers, she did not enjoy the murders as she had done," she caught a glimpse of a great principle. When you find health and spirits are failing, natural cheerfulness and interest in your work decreasing, — that you can no longer "Smile and smile, and torture while you smile," be sure your experience is in similitude that of the old woman's, and you are beginning to have an insight into the eternal fitness of things which govern the laws of hygiene. *Then* it will be wise for you "to take thought and know yourself, and stay your fingers in good time."

I cannot close without saying a few words upon one other subject, which has an important bearing upon professional

character and responsibility. Though not a *prohibitionist*, I am an advocate for temperance at all times and in all things. A sense of professional responsibility and self-respect should impel every one rigidly and strictly to observe and practise *total abstinence* from everything that stimulates or inebriates during *business hours*. There is the greatest need of caution in this direction. The continuation and the winding up of an honorable professional career may hang upon this thread, and it can be severed in a day, nay, in a single hour.

Unceasing vigilance, habitual prudence, and circumspection are indispensable if we would secure and maintain our principles; for even *appearances* are proofs sufficient to suspicious and malignant persons. However truly we may have kept the faith, however pure in motive and in acts our lives may be, "we ne'er can shape them so that evil-minded men will not their own construction put upon them." There are those who will always think, that because "their fellow-man is guilty of a skin not colored like their own," be it black, he is a slave or ought to be; be it red, he is indubitably a drunkard! These *temperance* principles, feelingly and seriously urged, have been the inviolable rule of my own professional life, without exception; and I can point to their *strict observance* with the greater pride and satisfaction in the face of *false accusation* and *gross injustice*.

Finally, gentlemen, let us strive in every way to do all we can by precept and example to advance every good work, and to aid in encouraging institutions tending to this end. Let us believe in honesty of purpose; that no desires not bounded by the highest principle, no actions not guided by the light of conscience, can advance our true progress. There will always be individual cases of men governed by no principle or interest, except that kind of principle and interest which pertains to "the almighty dollar;" who make extortionate charges for their services whenever they can

find subjects with more money than brains,—and the number of these is surprisingly large in every community. Such deluded persons are made to believe in the superior power, the magical achievements, the unequalled skill of their operator; and he whose real character is thus veiled by the illusion enjoys a short-lived prosperity, soon to be wafted away by the cold finger of truth and reality.

Tis a trite remark, but one that forces itself upon us every day, that "gross Deceit raises itself to high places, and sits in purple and fine linen, while Honesty is left to beg her bread, and plain Truth stands shivering in a blanket." Nevertheless, the good and true man will not relax his exertions, from a despondent contemplation of the false success that stalks triumphantly in the walks of life. Nor will the pure-minded suffer his faith in human progress to decay and perish, because he cannot see that the world moves as his sympathy and hope would have it. "There is a silver lining to every cloud," and there is no well so deep but that the stars can be seen from its depths shining at midnight.

Let us, then, enlarge our confidence in the power to exercise a redeeming and reformatory influence over our fellow-men; have more charity for their shortcomings, more patience with their infirmities, more faith, in the years to come, in the gradual and ultimate triumph of goodness, virtue, and truth, over corruption, vice, and fraud.

These sad anomalies that we daily witness in civilized life, these painful incongruities that disturb our sense of right and wrong, may, after all, be appropriate discords in the grand harmony of universal music, arranged by the Divine Master.

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will."

Let us, then, strive to be true and fearless, and to mix gentleness and love with fearlessness. Amid all mutations,

and fluctuations of old schools and new, it will be the maximum measure of attainment that secures the vantage ground, and the honest, truthful, conscientious discharge of practical duty only that will ensure a memory and a name worthy to be enrolled on the pages of Time.

May this thought serve to awaken in all the desire to attain similar excellence, a like meed of praise, and the gratitude which blesses and sanctifies those who have exemplified in their lives a title to the appellation of a just man and a public benefactor.

“Let us reach into our bosoms
For the key to others’ lives,
And with love towards erring nature
Cherish good that still survives.”





